

Three Private

MEDITATIONS,

Which being, for the most
Part, of Publick Concernment,
are therefore Published, by their Author,

GEO. WITHER.

The *First*, is, a *Private Thanksgiving*, consisting of *three Hymns*, whereby GOD is magnified for his *Mercy* vouchsafed in the late *Engagement* between the *English* and the *Dutch*, in *June 1665*. Composed after Celebrating the *Publick Thanksgiving* commanded by the *King*.

The *Second*, is a *Sacrifice of Praise & Prayer*, by him offered to Almighty GOD, for his providential respect, to *Him*, his *Wife* and *Children*, during his Imprisonment in the disgraceful *Goal* of *Newgate*, when left destitute of all ordinary means of subsistence, by being deprived both of his *Estate* and *Liberty*.

The *Third*, Intituled *NIL ULTRA*, is a *Soliloquium*, wherein this *Author* expresses the improbability of an effectual proceeding further, to prevent the *Sins* and *Plagues* increasing, by ought which he can offer to consideration.

Re-printed in the Year, 1666.

Third Edition

MEDITATIONS

Which being for the most

Part of Publick Concernment,
are therefore Published by their Author

Geo. WILKINSON.

The First is a Private Thanksgiving con-
sisting of three Hymns, whereby GOD is mag-
nified for his many mercies in the last Pe-
riod of our Lives, and the Blessings in
them bestowed after Celebrating his
Publick Thanksgiving commanded by the King.

The Second is a Sacramental Prayer & Prayer
by him that is Administering GOD, for his pro-
vidential respect, to His, his Wife and Child.
And also for his improvement in the duties
of the Lord of the House, and the duties of all
other persons of substance, by being requi-
red to pray for his Family and Country.

The Third is intended for the use of
a single person, who is to be assisted by
the immensity of an eternal presence
to preserve the Soul and Family in
that by which he is called to conser-
vation.

Printed in the Year 1686.



A Private

THANK-OBLATION,

Consisting of *Three Hymns*,

Whereby Almighty GOD is magnified
for his *Mercy* vouchsafed in the late *In-*
gagement between the *English* and the
Dutch, in *June 1665.* after Celebration
of the *Publick Thanksgiving* command-
ed by the *King.*

*The first Hymn, is a Preparation of the heart to
the Duty intended.*

NOW, what to GOD's Praise belongs,
I will sing in *holy Songs*;
Who shall from his *Heav'nly Quire*,
With such strains my heart inspire,
That (though distant) I and they
Therein joyn together may:
For, his influenced Grace
Is not barr'd by Time or Place.

Let his Rays of *Light Divine*,
In me, and upon me shine;
Let his *Holy Spirit* shake
Drowsie flesh, till it shall wake;

A 2

Tough

A Private Thank-Oblation.

Touch my lips, unloose my Tongue,
 That his *Praises* may be sung;
 For, till rouz'd up, from on high,
 Dark, and dull, and dumb am I.

3.

Humane words, cannot impart
 What GOD speaketh to my heart;
 Nor my faultring *tongue* declare
 All his *Operations* there;
 Yet, I am compell'd sometimes,
 In plain *Verses*, and broken *Rimes*,
 Thus, to stammer out such things,
 As to me the *Spirit* brings.

4.

To extol what God hath done,
 Here, I musing am alone;
 And, do praise him in my heart
 For what none can claim a part:
 But, what to his praise belongs
 I'll now sing in *vocal songs*;
 And, will so his praise declare,
 That, no man shall therein share.

*The second Hymn, being an imperfect Narrative and
 Confession to Gods glory, of what he hath done for us
 in the late Engagement; how little we have meri-
 ted the mercies vouchsafed, and how merciful
 GOD hath been to both Nations.*

LORD, in a publick Meeting, I, this day
 Have joyn'd, a *Sacrifice* of thanks to pay;
 And, being warmed at the common fire,
 (By what external notions could inspire)

To

A Private Thank-Oblation

To perfect that which is begun,
(And ought in duty to be done)
I, now withdraw into my heart,
To speak to thee, who therein art;
And learn, how, I may to thy praise,
So sanctifie my words and wayes,
That henceforth, they may more conduce unto
Thy glory, then they heretofore could do.
Oh! let my *Meditations* be
Made acceptable unto thee.

2.

For *Victory* confer'd, we prais'd thy *Name*;
We hear, our *foes* have likewise done the same.
And doubtless, whosoever *lost* or *won*,
To thee, are praises due for what is done;
Yea no less praise for what is *lost*,
Then that, for which we triumph most;
The one our *pride* may elevate,
The other, *humble us* for that
Which was mis-acted, or mis-spoke;
For, thou, who heed of both hast took,
So graciously, oh Lord, hast shar'd betwixt
Both *Nations* sweet with *bitter* intermixt,
That, no man, this day duly keeps,
Save he, who therein *sings* and *weeps*.

3.

For all *Transactions*, which concern in gross
Our *publick*, or our *private* gain or loss, (bring,
(And which unto our knowledge, *fringe* doth
Well-weigh'd) gives cause, no less to *weep* then
The *good successes* we have had,
Abate some feass, to make us glad;
The *hopes*, which those *events* do give
(Of what we willingly believe)

A Private Thank-Oblation.

So high our *expectations* rear,
As if we were above all fear.
But, when we hear the many *Lamentations*
For loss of *Limbs, Lives, and belov'd Relations,*
To *sadness* all our *Joy* it turns;
And he who much rejoiced, mourns.

A *final Conquest* is not yet obtain'd;
That, rarely with one *Victory* is gain'd:
For, they who lose at first, at last may win,
By mending *faults*, with which they did begin.
And they who did at first prevail,
Find, oftentimes, their hopes to fail:
Because to *trustless* things they trust,
Or else, employ to feed their Lust,
That which thy *Majesty* intends
Should strengthen them to better ends.

When, therefore most *Victorious* we appear,
Let us *rejoyce*, but with a *trembling* fear;
Lest, when the *rolling wheel* shall turn,
We who *rejoyce*, find cause to mourn.

Thou art but little pleas'd (if ought at all)
To see us triumph, when our foes do fall;
Especially, when they (though ours they be)
Are thy *known enemies*, no more then we.

To be our *GOD*, we thee profess;
They (to our knowledge) do no less.

We say, our trust is in thy *Name*;

They may as truly, say the same.

Their sins are many; we are sure
(Or may be) that ours are not fewer.

We have not yet, our *hopes* at full enjoy'd;
Nor are their *expectations* quite destroy'd;

A Private Thank-Oblation.

7

To praise thee therefore, We and they,
Are equally oblig'd this day:

VVe say the *Dutch* to us ingrateful be;
Our Conscience tells us we are so to thee;
They with our *Nation* cruelly have dealt;
Our inhumanity thy *Saints* have felt.

Their *Avarice* makes them oppress;
Ill husbandry and idleness,
Have made our wayes as grievous prove,
To those who seek for peace in love;
And we, and they, pursue the *course*,
Most likely to make bad things worse.

Then, Lord, which of us justly can expect
That our Contests should have a good effect?
Or, that the one should have a place
Above the other in thy Grace?

Had it so pleased thee, thou at first *shock*
Both *Earthen Pitchers* mightst have justly broke;
But they (as if they had been made of leather)
Are only bruise'd, by being knock'd together:

VVhich, in meer love to us and them,
Thou didst vouchsafe to give us time,
VVith more advisement to take heed,
VVhat, by *Contention*, will succeed;
Left both before their *Quarrels* end,
Be broke like *pots*, which none can mend:

Lord, were there but that *Mercy*, and no more,
In that which we pretend to praise thee for,
It merits from *this* and *that Nation*,
An everlasting *Thank-Oblation*.

For

For, in this *Mercy*, unto both extended,
 Are very many *Mercies* comprehended,
 So complicated, one within another,
 And, to thy *Judgments* linked so together,
 That, if we could be brought to learn,
 How, they both *Nations* do concern;
 To what each *Judgment* doth direct,
 What every *Mercy* might effect;
 What we should seek, what we should shun,
 And, what ought timely to be done;
 The wisest men among us could not tell
 Whether those things which us have pleased wel,
 Or, that which grieves us most, shall best
 Thy *Loving-kindness* manifest.

The *Trophies*, which most men delight to raise,
 As testimonies of a *thankful Praise*,
 For what thou daign'st, are but a *medly mirth*,
 Of wholsom *simples* mixt with courtest earth;
 Or, with such noisom *weeds* as grow
 Upon dunghils here below,
 That to thy nostrils and thine eyes,
 Offensive *fumings* vaporize,
 Which do provoke thine Anger more,
 Than many *Errors* heretofore:
 And that which for *thine Honour* some pretend,
 Is for their *own praise*, or a baser end;
 Either to satisfie their *Lust*,
 Or, praise *false gods*, in which they trust.

My GOD, look not severely upon this,
 Or on ought else that hath been done amiss;

For

For no Oblation can from us proceed;
 VVhich will deserve a favourable heed.
 Some of our Offerings, now and then,
 May beneficial be to men,
 Or, to thy Saints on earth extend,
 If we confer them to that end
 For which they seem to be bestown,
 (And in their welfare, seek our own :)
 But, to advantage thee, the preciousst thing,
 Which, we to please, or to appease can bring,
 Adds nothing : though thou pleased art,
 With what comes from a faithful heart,

II.

Be mindful still, that we are flesh and blood,
 Whence nothing can expected be that's good;
 Till by his Cross it shall be mortifi'd,
 Who, to redeem it from corruption, dy'd.
 Remember whereof we are made;
 That ev'n the best of us are bad;
 Our seeming sanctified joyes,
 Uncomly actions and rude noise,
 Which make thy best beloved sorry,
 Instead of adding to thy glory.

Oh ! let hereof, a free unfain'd confession,
 (A burnt Oblation made by true contrition,
 And, hallow'd by Christs blood) purge hence,
 All that which gives to thee offence.

12.

The more thou shalt enlarge our wealth and power;
 Our selves, let us lay down so much the lower;
 And, rather use them to unite together
 In love, then in destroying one another.
 He, in the best mode gives thee praise,
 Who ordereth aright his wayes ;

B

Who

Who, justifies thee in thy will,
 By thereunto conforming still;
 And brings to thee a *contrite heart*,
 Ascribing thereto no desert:
 This is, most gracious GOD, a *sacrifice*,
 Which thou didst never (never wilt) despise;
 And, such a *sacrifice*, I pray
 Make that which I present this day

Unfained thanks my heart returns to thee,
 For that, which thou hast done, *what e're it be*,
 Against, or for us: hearty thanks we owe
 Both for what thou withholdst, and dost bestow.

Prosperity is no true sign

Who is a *Favourite* of thine;

Nor any one dost thou reject,

Whom frequently thou dost correct,

Unless he be more *wilful* far

Then *frail*, as very many are;

And whether thou dost give us *wounds*, or *heal*,

It will at last conduce unto our *weal*,

If we, (but as we may) persevere

In contributing our endeavour.

14.

Two of thy greatest *Plagues* on us now lie;

The *third* is threatned, and seems very high:

Thy other *Judgments* also scatred are (where,

So thick, through these three Kingdoms ev'ry-

That, by them, very few or none,

Have scaped, being seiz'd upon;

Or, being pincht, in what relates

Unto their *Persons* or *Estates*:

Yet, *sin* doth most men so besot,

As if thy frowns they feared not;

And

And, are more zealous others to destroy,
Then, of the means their own peace to enjoy.
A madness, which worse plagues procures,
Than Pettilential Calentures.

Arise, O GOD, advance thy *Throne* on high;
Thy self, let thine own *things* glorifie.
Thy *Justice* and thy *Mercy* to unite,
That they may honour thee in all mens sight.

Rebuke those who delight in *War*,
And to thy *Saints* injurious are:
Give *Peace* to those, who *Peace* affect,
And them from all their foes protect,
That *Righteousness* and *Peace* may hither
Return, and here still reign together.
Thy foes are now become exceeding strong;
Thy coming therefore, Lord, defer not long.
But, *I have done*; for thou with pow'r
Art coming, and wilt keep thine hour.

Dear GOD, this petty sacrifice of mine,
Was took out of a *Treasury* of thine,
And, of mine own, I nought can thereto add,
Except my heart, which from thee too, I had:
Kept to thy self, now let that be,
And never left again to me;
Or wander thither, where it may
Unto the world be made a prey;
Or, by the temptings of the Devil,
Be drawn unto the love of evil;
Then *this* (and *that*, which I have heretofore,
To praise thee offer'd) thee shal praise much more,
Than many things, *done*, *heard*, and *told*,
In *Temples* deckt with Silk and Gold.

The third Hymn, proceeds to a thankful Illustration of GOD's deserved Praise, by acknowledging his Almightyness ; his observing what hath been openly and secretly done in every part of the World, by both the said Nations, and that no praise is justly due to either of us, but shame rather, for ought performed in the said Engagement.

MOST Almighty LORD of Hosts,
 High Protector of our Coasts,
 Who command'st, as thou dost please,
 Fire and Water, Earth and Seas ;
 Who look'st down from Heav'n, upon
 All that here on Earth is done,
 And survey'st her darkeſt parts,
 Ev'n the Crannies of mens hearts.

2.

Thou beheld'st the Preparations
 Of theſe wilful Neighbouring Nations ;
 Thou haſt heard what they have ſpoken,
 Heedeſt what ſuch words betoken ;
 Thou haſt ſearch'd out their Deſigns,
 With what thereto them inclines,
 And know'ſt whether of the two
 Is the worſt, if one be ſo.

3.

Thou obſerveſt what was done,
 Not in *Africa* alone,
 Or both *Indies* ; but what was
 Done likewise in ev'ry place :
 Why the *English* and the *Dutch*
 Are divided now ſo much :

What

What is false, with what is true ;
And to which most blame is due.

4.

Thou remembrest what Relations
Have been long between these Nations,
What *Professions* to each other
They did make when knit together;
Yea, what they profess to thee,
Which now seems forgot to be,
As if they were not such men,
Or such *Christians* now, as then.

5.

To prevent what is begun,
Much, by thee, was timely done ;
But, their *Avarice* and *Pride*
Them did more and more divide.
To *self-will* they did adhere,
Like men without *wis* or *fear* ;
So thou leftst them both to do
What they were enclin'd unto.

6.

Then with *Streamers* and with *Flags*,
Foolish vaunts and *shameless brags*,
They weigh'd Anchors from the shoar,
Which by some was seen no more ;
And, with an unchristin rage,
'Gainst each other did engage ;
Fire and *Water*, in that hour,
Striving which should most devour.

7.

Dread of Death, that man amazes ;
Noise, and smoke, and sudden blazes
This man blinds, and deafneth so,
That he knows not *Friend* from *For* ;

Some are slain by their own *Tools*;
Wise-men speed as ill as *Fools*;

Here a *Valiant Souldier* dies,

There a *Coward* sprawling lies.

8.

Loud the thundring *Guns* did roar,

Sails, and *Masts*, and *Keels* were tore;

Ships were either split or fir'd;

Men by thousands there expir'd;

This man sinks, and that man swims;

Some escap'd with loss of limbs.

But to whether best befel,

Thou alone, O Lord, canst tell.

9.

Horrid *sights*, and *sounds* without,

Them assaulted round about,

Which, in some, did thoughts begin,

That rais'd greater *Frights* within;

And, though wounds did grieve them sore,

That tormented them much more;

For their pains none can declare,

Who in *spirit* wounded are.

10.

This we know that thou art just,

As is ev'ry thing thou dost:

Thou art *kind*, and lov'st so well,

That by *woundings* thou dost *heal*,

Thou art *wise*, and actest so,

That we thereby *wise* might grow;

And by what was lately done,

Might new *Mercies* be begun.

11.

Not to *us*, LORD, for the same,

Be the praise, but to thy *Name*:

Amos

Unto

Unto us, for what was done,
Nought belongs, but *shame* alone.
We were so much terrify'd,
That, we knew not what we did,
Nor yet seem to understand,
What *work* thou hast now in hand.

12.

This *Correction* was in love,
Which, if both should so improve
As (if they had grace) they may
By true *penitence* this day,
Our endeavour to be *Friends*,
To thine honour so much tends,
That, it would for both these *Nations*,
Prove the best of their *Oblations*.

13.

Victories do not belong
To an *Arm* of *Flesh*, though strong.
Tis nor *Policy* nor *Force*,
Ships, nor *Troops* of *Men* and *Horse*;
No, nor *formal thanks* and *prayers*,
That prevents *Death*, or *Despairs*;
But it is thy *powerful Arm*,
That secures from *fear* and *harm*.

14.

Therefore *praise*, for all *well done*,
I ascribe to thee alone:
All that men have brought to pass,
Merits nothing but *Disgrace*;
And the best that we can do,
Will but *Ruine* add thereto;
-If we keep our *crooked ways*,
Or shall *grudge* at thy due *praise*.

A RESOLVE,

Occasioned by somewhat spoken concerning this Thank-Oblation, and this Authors other Writings.

IT may be, many will these Hymns condemn,
 Because, they do not relish well to them.
 They likewise may Inferiour Gods offend,
 Because in this Oblation, I intend
 No praise to them, but that, praise should be given
 To magnifie alone, my GOD in heaven.
 The first of these, I leave to their own mode;
 In offering up Oblations unto GOD:
 For, if well-pleasing unto him they be,
 They cannot be distasteful unto me;
 And whatsoever they of me shall say,
 I may be thereby profited some way.
 As for the latter, there is little need
 That I to their deserving should take heed:
 For Prophets, Priests and Poets of their own
 Enough they have, to make their merits known.
 These, to extoll their Patrons, can, and may
 Write more, and speak much more, then I dear say,
 Who, (what so'er advantage thence may flow)
 Can praise no man, for what I do not know.
 These do, as their inspirers them incline,
 And I do, as I am inspir'd by mine.

Moreover, it becomes not him, who sings
 A Song of praise unto the King of Kings,
 The Attributes of men to intermingle
 With his (as to those works he worketh single)

That,

A Private Thank-Oblation.

17

*That were to follow their absurd example,
Who worship GOD and Baal within one Temple;
Or Chronicle the Deeds by HERO'S done,
With Tales of Robin Hood, and Little John:
For these respects, I know men Sober-witted
Will me excuse for what may seem omitted;
And, as for those men, who so prudent are not,
Whether they me excuse, or no, I care not.*

To my Dearly Beloved Children.

ABOUT twenty years now past, though I had then temporal possessions, which I might probably have given & bequeathed, I composed and intended for your Legacy, *A Soliloquie and Prayer*; which I had spread in Writing before GOD on your behalves; and I believe it shall continue ever in his view: But, there being but one thereof, both you and I were deprived of our *Composure*, when the Book, for which I here suffer, was taken out of my Closet. Therefore, being now likely to be so separated from you, how much soever it may concern our temporal or spiritual well-beings, that I may thenceforth perhaps never see you more. I send you this Sacrifice of Praise and Prayer, next following, to be instead of that which is lost; for it contains in effect somewhat, (as to the Petitionary part) of that which was spread before GOD (as aforesaid) in a larger Scrole. Take it into your serious considerations, and lay it up among your Evidences; For it will speak to your advantage, when I can speak no more for you; when other men who can speak for you, will not; when many perhaps will speak

C

against

against you, and when you shall not be able to speak for your selves.

GOD sanctifie unto you this brief *Memorandum*, and you to his glory, that we may all meet together in him to our everlasting joy. Be obedient to your Mother, the enjoyment of whose Company, will more then recompence the loss of mine ; For GOD hath endowed her with so much maternal prudence and love, that by her counsel (if you despise it not) your *Prosperity* may be continued on the Earth until *Christ* comes to gather together his *Elect*. Remember the counsel of your *earthly Father*, that the promise made by your *heavenly Father* to the *Rechabites*, may be enlarged to you and your Posterities ; For, your and their personal obedience to GODs Covenant made with all *Mankind* in *Christ Jesus*, will be required (according to that assisting Grace which he vouchsafeth) toward the accomplishing of what I have prayed for concerning you. The blessing of GOD be with you and Farwell.

Your Affectionate Father,

Newgate Feb. 15,
1662.

GEO : WITHER.

A

Sacrifice of Praise & Prayer

Offered unto Almighty GOD, by *George Wither*, for his gracious *Providence*, in providing for *Him*, his *Wife* and *Children*, during his Imprisonment in the disgraceful Goal at *Newgate*, and when left destitute of all ordinary means of subsistence, by being deprived both of his *Estate* and *Liberty*.

LORD, though my *Prayers* and my *Praises* be
Unworthy to be offer'd up to thee,
Thus (as I am oblig'd) I essay
To add unto thine *Honour* what I may,
By publishing both with my *Tongue* and *Pen*,
Thy *Loving-kindness* to the sons of men;
Especially, in those particulars
Whereby thy kindness unto me appears.

Prais'd be thy *blessed Name*; for thou art speedy
In shewing thy compassion to the *Needy*;
And leav'lt not any *Sufferer* in despair,
Who timely seeks thy help by faithful prayer,
In patient waiting during his probation,
For thy appointed hour of *Salvation*.
Of this, thy never failing *Clemency*,
Few men have had more evidence than I.
Or in all straits, vouchsaf'd more seasonably
A needfull, and a competent supply;

C 2

Yea,

Yea, though my *sufferings* have been great and
 And I in flesh as sensible as any (many,
 Of ev'ry *grievance*, thou hast by their length
 Improved so my patience and my strength;
 That, oft such *grievances*, were not alone
 As tolerable as if they were none :
 But such as also have my joy encreast,
 When I to other men seem'd most oppress'd.
 For, though I have compleated now well near,
 In weal and wo, the three and fiftieth year,
 And six *Confinements*, since I first begun
 That *Work*, which I thought needful to be done;
 Thou hast preserv'd me so, and me so arm'd
 Against all *Changes*, that none me hath harm'd;
 Which unto me a *knowledge* doth derive
 Of what thou art, that's more than spec'ulative ;
 That what experimentally I speak,
 In other men may more impression make,
 Than when I *Notions* only shall declare,
 That were infus'd into me through the ear.
 And 'tis not thy least *Mercy*, that of late
 Thou dost their seeming *Charity* abate, (me
 Who thought they might thereby have tempted
 To wrong my conscience, and be false to thee,
 By smoothing or adulterating that,
 Which to *Truths* vindication may relate :
 For, when with needful food men bait their hook,
 The heedless hungry Fishes are soon took ;
 And, whether we confide in thee or no,
 Whilst we have Oyl and Meal, 'tis hard to know.
 Nor I, nor mine (though rob'd of all) ought
 What's needful for the belly or the back. (lack
 Thou hast my *Wife* and *Children* cloath'd & fed,
 When I could neither give them *Cloth* nor *Bread*.
 And

And from the Earth, (when in seed, branch and
I seemed likely to be rooted out; (root,
My *Withered Sprouts* were then by thee replanted,
Where they enjoy the nourishment they wanted:
So timely, and in such a manner too, (do;
VVas that vouchsaf'd which thou wert pleas'd to
That for it my *Well-wishers* prais'd thy *Name*;
And next thereat my *envious foes* became;
Especially in that place, where their worst
And last despights were manifested first;
For there; and in their sight, by whom undone
I seem'd to be, that mercy was begun.

The *Families* from whom I was design'd
To take my being, thou hast now twice joyn'd,
And their two *Surnames*, being joyn'd together,
Denominate my *Grandson*, **HUNT L'VVITHER**,
VWho is in possibility to have
Earth of his own wherein to make his Grave;
And find a *Livelihood* whilst here he lives,
If he thy Bounty thankfully receives;
(And no whit further shall be trusted in,
Than that should be, which hath supplied bin
Instead of what I lost) For, Lord, in thee,
(And not in what thou giv'st) our trust should be.

My only *Daughter* when left *portionless*,
And without any likely hopefulness
Of more than thou didst on her Birthday give her;
Yea, when I was disabled to relieve her,
Thou didst, ev'n in that great necessity,
Espouse into a *Loving Family*,
Enobled by a *Pedigree* or *Stem*,
VWhich hath no blemish to disparage them;
Or such wants, as may make the reputation
Of *Births* and *Titles* lose their estimation.

Oh ! let thy so uniting them together,
 Make them a mutual blessing to each other ;
 And, by consid'ring with due thankfulness,
 What thou hast done for me in my distress,
 Make both my Children and their whole descent
 With thy good pleasure, at all times content ;
 That they to others, good example giving,
 By their *well-doing*, joyn'd with *right believing*,
 (And likewise heeding how thou dost proceed
 With such as in thy *Fatherhood* confide)
 They never may despair, though quite bereft
 Of what their *earthly Father* might have left :
 And, from my personal experiments,
 Let them, thereof to minde them, take some hints.

For when I by the world seem'd quite forsaken,
 And she, with *Lands* and *Goods*, from me had taken
 My *Liberty* ; that, what then grieved me
 Might more imbittred, and redoubled be,
 By what my Children suffred ; when, they had
 No means of comfort, and, thereby grew sad :
 Thou didst for that a Remedy provide,
 By making them a *Bridegroom*, and a *Bride*
 (Whilst I imprison'd was within that place,
 Which added to my *Poverty*, disgrace)
 To my good liking, and their own content,
 Without self-seeking or disparagement.
 This providential mercy, did appear
 The more, in that, they likewise married were,
 (As I awhile before, presag'd they should)
 Without such *portions*, as I lately could
 Have given them, when thou didst me disable
 Not without cause. And, tis considerable
 That, they kept both their Weddings in the sight
 Of those, who them pursu'd with most despight ;

Ev'a

Ev'n in my *plundered house*, and at that time,
 In which my wife had not to welcom them
 A *dish* or *spoon*, but what a neighbour lent ;
 Or meat, but what by thee was thither sent.
 Yea, thou hast, when the world dem'd us bread,
 Me and my *Consort* competently fed,
 (E'er since, the world depriv'd us of our own)
 By them, whose faces are to us unknown ;
 To evidence, that all thy *Saints* are friends,
 To him; who on thy *providence* depends,
 And to the utmost of his power perseveres
 In just and conscientious endeavors :
 Yea, though corruption so in him prevaileth,
 That of his duty many wayes he faileth.
 He, hoping those *Experiments* to some
 May comfortable in like *straits* become:
 Thus, for their sakes, in *words* exprest they be
 For, without *words*, all things are known to thee.

All this consider'd, I obliged am
 To take unto my self deserved shame,
 When therewith I will heed, how oft, by sin,
 To thy commands I have rebellious bin ;
 As also, that exceeding graciousness,
 Which thou to me vouchsafest ne'ertheless :
 And it begets in me a greater fear,
 Then when thy *Chastisements* upon me are ;
 For, in correcting me, thou art more mild
 Then is a loving Father to his Child,
 When he not only *chideth*, but *intreats*,
 Kind language mixing also with his *threats* ;
 Whips him, then kisseth ; and sometimes to see
 Him weep, doth shed as many tears as he.

LORD, for those *mercies* graciously afforded,
 (Well moriting, by me to be recorded)

Accept

Accept this petty *Sacrifice of praise*,
 And make us truly thankful all our dayes;
 (Not only in our *verbal Thank-Oblations*,
 But also, in our *lives and conversations*;) *Thou*
 For, though we cannot *Golden Gifts* prefer,
 Yet we may offer *Frankincense and Myrrh*;
 And from him, who hath not a *Lamb* to give,
 A *Dove* thou with acceptance wilt receive.
 Vouchsafe us, in each temporary trial
 A constant progress with true *self-denial*;
 Let not the *benefits* we have received
 Be underpriz'd, because we were bereaved
 Of those *externals*, which we have enjoyed,
 For, their enjoyment might have us destroyed;
 Yea, those whom thou mak'st *poor* thou lov'st as
 As those, whom thou art pleased to *enrich*; (much
 And, by thy *Grace* we may advantage make,
 Of whatsoever thou dost *Give or Take*,

Keep me and mine from that *Prevarication*
 VWhich turns thy *proffred Grace* to *Reprobation*.
 Incline us to desire, and to embrace
 All means of perseverance in thy *Grace*,
 And, never let the *asking*, or the *granting*,
 Of any necessary gift be wanting.
 Make us to shun and hate all things, whereby
 We may offend thy awful *Majesty*;
 Nor limiting thy *Mercy*, neither standing
 Thy just *Decrees*, as causes of our wandering:
 For, no man to be wicked is forc'd,
 Or left by thee, untill he leaves thee first;
 Which all men will confess, when from their eyes
 That scurril is rub'd which yet upon them lies.

So knit us in one *True-love-knot* together,
 By loving thee, and love to one another.

That

A Private Thank-Oblation.

25

That, we in all *Temptations* fast may stand
And *Sathan*, nor the world dissolve that band;
For, where *Love* in the heart keeps residence
Difference in *Judgment*, gives no more offence
Then differing faces, although more delight
We take in those, who love and judge aright
VVhen we offend, Correct us as our Father
VVith all thy *Temporary scourges*, rather
Then suffer *sins*, by sins to be corrected,
(VVhich is the greatest Plague can be inflicted)
And that, we faint not underneath thy Rod,
With stripes, mix mercy still, my gracious GOD,
I ask nor *Honors*, *Liberty*, nor *Wealth*,
Nor *temporary pleasures*; no nor *healish*,
Save, so far only, as thou know'st the use
Of such things, to thine honor may conduce
VVith our *eternal safety*, and the Good
Of those with whom we have a *Brotherhood*.
And, hereto I will add but this *Request*,
(VVhich comprehends all that can be express)
For me and mine. Oh let it, LORD, be plac'd
Where it may stand, as long as *Time* shall last,
Within thy sight; and though, nor I, nor they
For whom I sue, can merit what I pray,
Vouchsafe it for his sake, in whom I have
So much confided, as his *Boone* to crave. (sprung,

Let us Dear GOD, from whom our Children
And, all their Off-spring, whether old or young,
Who, from our loins have being, or shall come
Into this world, until the day of Doom,
By him be so preserved, at whose cost
Redeem'd we were, that no soul may be lost,
Or be deprived of thy promises
In passing thorow this *lifes wilderness*,

D

Either

Either by *Adams* fault, or our own guilt :
 And then, of other things give what thou wilt :
 For, this I value more, then if I had
 Thy Grant, we should all *Kings* and *Queens* be
 Possessing in this life the largest measure (made,
 Of temporary *honors*, *wealth*, and *pleasure*.
 For they are *baubles*, in respect of that
 My sanctify'd Ambition aimeth at.
 They who obtain'd most of them, were but slaves,
 VVho dropt with infamy into their Graves;
 And oft felt misery to them befalls,
 VVho get their bread by cobbling under *stalls*;
 Or, in this world, advanced are no higher;
 Then raking dirty rags out of the mire.
 Thus I in brief, have sum'd up my *Request*,
 Grant this, and let who pleaseth, take the rest.
 LORD, I know none, who ever heretofore
 Did in this mode thy Majesty implore;
 And, from what he believeth of thee it comes,
 That, so to do, thy servant now presumes.
 Forgive me if this absolute *Petition*
 Extends beyond the bound of my *Commission*;
 For, nothing I intend, what ere I crave,
 Save, what thou art well-pleas'd I should have,
 VVhose will I so prefer before mine own
 In all things (if to me my heart is known)
 That whatsoever may succeed thereon
 Now or hereafter, Let thy will be done;
 My soul thou hast inclined to believe
 His Promises, who said, *Ask, and receive*;
 Help then my *unbelief*: For if the grant
 Of this *Petition* shall that fulness want
 VVhich is desir'd; no want of *Love* in thee
 Occasions it, but, some defects in me;

And,

And that *Obstruction* which thereon is cast,
Shall by thy Love removed be at last.

He that in *Faith* and *Love* can to this *Prayer*

Say for himself, *Amen*, shall ne'er despair;

For, it implies, he is no stranger to

What *man* may hope for, & what *God* will do.

Newgate Feb. 1661.

An Advertisement.

WHEN that *private Poem* was taken from me,
for which I am now a *Prisoner*, many printed Books, Writings, and Evidences, being my proper Goods, were therewith unlawfully taken away; among which there was a *Manuscript* in Verse, intituled, *A Legacy to my Children*, consisting (as I remember) of about three or four sheets, wherein that which is prayed for in the preceding *Meditation*, in relation to my *Posterity*, was much enlarged with *Expostulations* and *Petitions* thereto pertinent. The Restoration thereof, I would acknowledge to be a favour, though it ought not in justice to be detained, because it contains nothing offensive to the Civil or Spiritual Government now established: And this *Advertisement* is inserted, in hope, one of those to whose hand it may come, will be a means of restoring unto me both that *Manuscript*, and an *Elegy*, which was also therewith taken from me. I would likewise be thankful to the Restorer.

Geo. With.

At my House in the Savoy,

June 1665. was this Advertisement added.



N I L U L T R A.

Being a *Soliloquie*, wherein this *Author* expresseth the improbability of an effectual proceeding further, in his endeavours (to prevent the *Sins* and *Plagues* increasing) by ought offered to consideration.

Psal. 1. 3.

When the Foundations are destroyed, what can the Righteous do?

I At a *Nonplus* am this day,
And know not what to think or say,
Or what part I am next to play:
That therefore which I now express,
Whether the mark I *miss* or *hit*,
To publick view I will commit,
And leave to God the giving it,
In his own time, a good success,

We

2. We neither love his *Laws* nor *Him*;
Those men whose deeds we did condemn,
We (by our imitating them)

Have justifi'd in all their works.
They, who have seem'd *self-deniers*
In their professing *Truths*, are *Liars*,
Like *Lillies* look, but scratch like *Briars*;
Talk *Christian-like*, but live like *Turks*;

3. Some say I dote; and that 'tis so,
I almost am perswaded too,
When I consider what I do:

For, little less than doteth he,
Who gives them *Bread*, who look for *Chaff*;
Cast *Pearls* to Swine, who look for *Drass*;
And strives to save them, who do laugh
When sinking down to Hell they be;

4. *Examples* we have had of old,
And daily we fulfill'd behold,
What hath been oft of late forgot;
Yet more and more besott'd grow.
Nor *Chastisements*, nor *Mercy* shew'd,
Though oft withdrawn, and oft renew'd;
Nor what hath for our sins ensu'd,
Can make us heed the things we know.

5. What can by me be said or done,
To stop them who still headlong run,
To meet the mischiefs coming on,
And which already are in view?
Since men will neither see nor hear
What is apparant ev'ry-where,

Nor have Grace, Courage, Wit or Fear,
 VWho can prevent what may ensue?

How can *good Sequels* be expected,
 VWhere *Truth* and *Reason* are neglected,
 And *gross crimes*, not alone suspected,
 But acted also with *shame*?

VWhere men, all *Prophanations* dare,
 In all well-doings *cowards* are;
 And seem to have no sense nor care,
 Either of *good*, or *evil Fame*?

7.

VWhen what relates to *Earth* and *Heav'n*,
 Seems of its proper use bereaven,
 (And what for common use was given,
 Made only for th'*abusers* sake)

VWhat *humane Wit* can save them from
 A sad inevitable *doom*,

VWho false to other men become,
 And *Pitfalls* for themselves do make?

8.

VWhen first: I did converse with men,
 They were exceeding wicked then;
 But now seem worse by five in ten:

For, till of late I never heard,
 That such *Abominations* were,
 So impudently acted here

VWithin this *Clime*, as now they are
 By probable *Reports*, aver'd.

9.

If *Justice* executed were,
 If we were what we would appear,
 In thought, in deed, in word, sincere;
Oppressors and *self-seekers* fewer;

It

It might be hoped that those few,
VVho to good principles are true,
Might more successfully pursue,
VVhat would at last, our weal procure.

But whilst we see one crying sin
Brings ev'ry day another in,
Whence new Corruptions do begin,

VVhat can the Righteous hope to do,
But meekly wait on GOD, (until
Her measure wickedness doth fill)
Submitting all things to his will,
And adding their Amen, thereto?

VVhilst we each man's humour claw,
Turn Grand Oppressions into Law,
Stand not of GOD, or men in awe,
And, Truths, by Violence confute;

VVe bring but fewel to that fire,
Or breath to blow the flame still higher,
VWherein our hopes will quite expire;
And Prudence then is justly mute.

For when GOD threatens Desolations,
If men turn due Humiliations
To Triumphs and vain Retirements;

VVhat can be justly then expected?
But changing hopes into despairs,
More Breaches, instead of Repairs,
And that our formal thanks and prayers,
Should be offensive, and rejected?

Of

Oft under *Trust* is hatched *Treason*,
 VVise to be thought, is to want *Reason*,
Sincerity is out of season;

Foundations likewise are orethrown:
 To speak the Truth is now a Crime;
 To look for Justice 'tis no time,
 (To be a Knave, the way to crime)
 And *sin* almost full ripe is grown.

My *witness*, therefore, having born,
 (Among men in the hope forlorn)
 I'll be all alone, sit down and mourn

For that which cannot prevented.
 My *Lor*, I'll meekly take with those,
 VVhom GOD shall unto that expose,
 VVhich may befall both *Friends* and *Foes*,
 And therewith will remain contented.

This now, is all that can be done;
 That therefore I resolving on,
 VVill let the *world* a while alone,
 And GOD therein to work his will?

He only take that *Ammunition*,
 VVhich gives no just cause of *Inspection*,
 And (without seeking their perdition)
 Let filthy men be filthy still.

Thus far forth I have trod the *Maze*,
 VVithout offence to any *Cause*,
 That's justifi'd by *righteous Laws*;

But now no further can proceed:
 For so *Confusion* here abounds,
 That *Good* and *Evil* it confounds,

And

And whirle us in an endless Round
Which fruitless makes both word and deed

For they will dance upon the brink
Of Hell it self (and fondly think

They are secure because they wink
Their open danger cannot see,

But are so vext to heat me still
Their Heaven borders upon Hell

That for my wishing of them well
They wish but little good to me

Perhaps too, as the Round now goes,
They who my good intents oppose,

(And are both mine and their own foes)
May seek to take my life away

If they so do; when that is done
I shall beyond their reach be gone

And he who all deeds looks upon
Will suddenly their spite repay

Yet I shall make no such Reply
As may not with their weak consist:

I, neither by the Sword, or Pest,
Or Famine, wish aveng'd to be;

Or by ought else, which might destroy
The Life which here they do enjoy

(Though they that Mercy mis-employ)
This rather shall my Prayer be;

Let GOD, confound their pride, their hate,
And all their Plots annihilate,

Who shall design to praise that
Which may to his dishonour tend.

Let

E

Let

UMI

Let none of those endeavours thrive,
Whereby ungodly men contrive;
How they another may deprive

Of his just Freedom, *For, or Friend.*

21.

This *Deprecation* doth not reach
Mens Persons, or that *Love* impeach
Which *Christian Verity* doth teach:

For, to avenge themselves of wrong,
That giveth liberty to none;
But, to do good for evil done
Required is of every one,

To whom a *Sainthood* doth belong.

22.

The *Publick Welfare* I prefer
Before mine own particular;
And this for truth I may aver,

Whoever shall the same deny:

My *Country*, or my *Sovereign Lord*,
Neither by *actions*, or by *word*,
Or by my *Pen*, or by my *Sword*,

To *self-ends* injured live I.

23.

I have not broke my Faith to those
Who did a *Trust* in me repose,
Whether they prov'd my *Friends* or *Foes*;

But did with *Loyalty* submit,
To do, or suffer under them
Who exercise the *Power Supreme*,
Which is at the dispose of Him,

Who gives and takes, as he sees fit,

24.

I never did for *Love* or *Hate*,
Act, or design to innovate

The

The Government of Church or State,

But did my duties in my place;
And when I fear'd that for our sin
An *Anarchy* was creeping in,
Endeavor'd, when it did begin,

How to preserve the *Common Peace*.

25.

When *Civil Pow'rs* were so divided,
That then both *Fools* and *Wise* men sided
As *Interest* or *Conscience* guided,

I sought not to enlarge the rent;
But, being called *Aid* to bring,
To, (and by) them, whose counselling
Had been Authoriz'd by the *King*,
I, to perform my duty, went.

26.

Retir'd from *Court* and *City* then,
I liv'd among plain *Countrymen*,
Employing otherwhile the *Pen*,

My private *Musings* to record;
Which, I had more desire to do,
Then that which I was call'd unto,
Till I was importuned so,
That I at last, put on my *Sword*.

27.

To do my best, forth arm'd I came,
(My *Conscience* warranting the same)
And purpos'd nothing worthy blame,

By unjust *violence*, or *guile*.
For, in sincerity I thought,
A course we follow'd as we ought,
Whereby *means* might to pass be brought,
Divided *Friends* to reconcile.

But so divisions them engag'd; who were in that Contest engag'd,
 And, such ill consequences press'd;
 That, I my Troop did soon disband;
 And, hopeless I should ought to stay
 Successful in a martial way,
 My Sword, and Arms quite flung away,
 And took my Pen again in hand.

Such new Adventures this began,
 That, I appeared to be then
 Betwixt the Fire and Frying pan;
 For, such proceedings I spy'd,
 That, they who with the best intent
 Pursu'd the way in which they went
 (And ill to neither party meant)
 Found least respect on either side.

To see what was done well or ill,
 I had just cause, against my will,
 To be there, an ey-witness still,
 Where grand affairs transacted were;
 As well the Person as the Name;
 I knew of most men, who by fame
 Were said to merit praise or blame,
 And who did best or worst appear.

Self-love, base Avarice, and Pride;
 I saw among themselves divide
 The publick Rights, on either side;
 Their Foes befriending out of season;
 Well-meaning Innocents destroying,
 Their pow'r to favour Guilt employing,
 And

And often to a self-destroying, blind-ness set
Against their Friends committing Treason.

I saw both GOD and Man offended;
Much finding fault, but little mended;
Good Life and Piety pretended;
But few whose words and works were one;
They who most quarrell'd with each other,
In evil so agreed together,
That to repose a trust in either,
I found but little cause, or none.

The worse men were, they seem'd the better
To serve their ends, and much the fitter
To be enriched and made greater.

Him who did most indulge their sin;
Or, to inflame their lust brought sin;
Or, were unto their foes most cruel;
They kept about them as a Jewel;
And, such, their chiefs esteem did win.

Such as had neither Grace nor Wit,
Such as Job judged men unfit
Among his *Shepherds Dogs* to sit;
Ev'n such as were, the other day,
More worthy of contempt than those
Who liv'd by picking Hips and Sloes,
(With such food as on Hedges grows)
Vvere honour'd; yea few more than they.

These having scratcht up wealth and power,
In Court and City, Town and Tower,
Did set as if our fatal hour
Vvere hither making an advance:

The mean-while men, *here*, and abroad,
At *bazards* plaid, in such a mode,
(At *Hide*, at *Even*, and at *Odd*)

As if all things were rul'd by *chance*;

Thereby my *bazards* greater were
Than those which I had cause to fear,
When *War* most dreadfull did appear:

For, at what I before had done,
One party only took offence;

But, I have anger'd ever since

All parties, who have lost the sence

Of what they seem to carry on.

This made me dip my *Pen* in Gall,
Impartially reproving all,
Without regard what might befall

To me, whilst just things I intended:

For, alwayes I regarded so

Their Honour, and their Profit too,

With whom my *Muses* had to do,

That none have cause to be offended.

It nev'rtheless, on me so brought
Their *hate*, whose *welfare* I had sought,

That of mine own they left me nought,

Which might my likely want supply:

No place whereon to rest my head,

No certainty of daily bread,

But in my old age to be fed

And cloathed by pure Charity.

In which strait GOD provided so,

That I yet live his work to do,

Well

Well pleased with my portion too;
 Yea, more than when it larger seem'd:
 For, what's bereaved was but *Lumber*,
 Which did with many cares decumber,
 And, is not put into the number
 Of things which merit best esteem.

40.

I therefore, whatsoev'r befel,
 To High and Low did plainly tell,
 (Whether they took it ill or well)

Such things as I thought needful were;
 And oft expressed with my Pen,
 What might minde me and other men,
 More heed to take, both *how*, and *when*,
 Unto our selves we *Traytors* are.

41.

And *time to come*, when I am dead,
 Shall find there will be still much need
 To tolerate one in my stead,

That may pursue what I begun.
 VVhen God so pleaseth, let him come
 To do him service in my room;
 And, let the Work he calls me from,
 Thrive better than it yet hath done.

42.

My time is almost wholly past;
 And, thinking this may be the last,
 For a *Nil Ultra* here 'tis plac'd,

As having no more now to say:
 But if my life God longer spare,
 And shall my heart anew prepare,
 His pleasure further to declare,
 I'll take this *Boulder-stone* away.

I sate

Well pleased with my times
 Yes, more than I am
 In that with which my fancies chime,
 Expressing that in singing Rimes,
 Which I suppose to be in season
 And is not out of season
 Elle little heed they give thereto
 Or, if plain Truths observe they do,
 Good meanings are mistaken for
 That safe it is not to speak Rimes

Things may result sometimes perchance,
 Ev'n from a trifling circumstance,
 Which will be helpful to advance
 Th' effecting of a Great Design
 Once e're *Elisha* would begin
 To speak, a *Fidler* was call'd in ;
 Of use, that seem'd then to have been

For his work, so may this for mine
 Man proposeth, but **GOD** disposeth,
 and his will be done

God save the King!

My time is almost wholly past
 And, thinking this may be the last
 For a *Widow* here to stay
 As having nothing now to say
 But if my life God longer spare
 And shall my heart anew prepare
 To declare
 I'll take this *Widow* for away

Here followeth a brief Defence in Answer to private Objections, lately made against some passages in this Author's Writings, heretofore published.

I Am informed by good Friends, that among those *Expressions* which I thought pertinent to this *Generation*, I have here & there intermingled that which is distastful to many, who are not therein of my judgment, and that I have thereby lost their good esteem. This I find experimentally so true, that not a few have neglected me, more to my grief in relation to them, and for their sakes than for mine own, who am not ignorant how I might both have prevented, and may yet repair that loss hereafter. Nevertheless, whatsoever I am, or may be thereby exposed unto, my resolution is, neither to desert those *Principles* whereto I conscientiously adhered, until I am convinced of error; nor to deceive any man, by seeming that which I am not: For, I so abhor to comply for meer outward respects with any *Person* or *Society*, in things which I cannot yet believe are agreeable to God's revealed Will, and *Christian* prudence; and so far also from recanting what I have conscientiously professed, though to my personal disadvantage, tho I lose all my seeming friends yet left, (who have not *Love* enough to be peaceably-minded toward their Brethren, who are conformable, according to their understanding, to the whole Will of God revealed in his Word) that, as I will neither *obstinately resist* or *wilfully neglect* the means

of better information, so I will not recede from the *Christian Liberty* due to me, and all other men.

Many suppose there is no *salvation*, save in that *particular Church* only, whereof they are *members*: But I do believe (as to me it seems implied in *Psal. 87.*) that the *City of GOD* extends it self into every part of the World, even into *Egypt, Philistia, Tyre, Ethiopia*, yea and into *Babylon* also; and, that under every outward *Form* and *Dispensation* whatsoever, God hath an *Elect People*, who are *Citizens of Sion*, though their *particular Churches*, which are as it were *distinct Wards* of that *spiritual Corporation*, may have many blemishes, ignorances, errors, and defilements for the present. *In many things we err all.* They who know most, know but in part; yea, the *Apostles*, long time after they were chosen by our *Saviour*, judged not aright of his *Kingdom*, nor were free from being ambitious of a *Prelatical Prebeminency*, but subject to many misapprehensions; and some of them seduced for a while, by an *Antichristian Persecuting spirit*; as many persons in *Congregational & National Churches* have ever since been, and zealous without knowledge, in *Practices* and *Principles* tending to that *Babylonish Confusion*, which will universally come to an end ere long, though it hath lately begun to be re-inforced. True *Faith* cannot be evidenced without *good works*; which being imperfect in the best of men, we have no such certain *mark* whereby unfeigned *Disciples* may be known, as by their being loving to each other, and charitably affected toward all men; yea, although they are our personal enemies: and this *mark* of *distinguishment* *Christ* himself hath left us.

Upon

Upon these and such like considerations, I have been as wary as possibly I could, so to use my *Christian Liberty* at all times, and in all places, that I might not offend a weak Believer: And, we have so many among us who dissent from each other, that it makes the performance of that duty very difficultly inoffensive; and hath put me to more trouble in the flesh, and occasioned more outward inconveniences, by infringing my just *private liberty*, than many of those sufferings put together, which are very grievous to other men. I dare not, and do openly profess (tho some think it needless) my belief and judgment, as oft as I see just occasion given: yet do I not voluntarily separate myself from any *Persons or Congregations*, who are not apparantly and maliciously wicked in their lives or doctrines; but separate from their damnable errors and sins only, as much as I may; yea, my Conscience makes me afraid, I may justly offend by not complying in some things *Indifferent*, Civil or Divine, which are not repugnant to God's revealed Word, though not thereby commanded.

Where I know not any weak brother to be then present, whom I may thereby offend, (and when I am thereto inclined for no carnal respects) I can communicate with any, professing belief in *Christ Jesus*, either in *Humiliations, Thanksgivings, Breaking of Bread* in commemoration of our Saviours Passion, or in *Prayer*; where nothing is so idolatrously or superstitiously enjoined or practised, that it derogates from the honour of God, or is contrary to the Canon of his Word, or may in my understanding seem destructive to true *Piety or Morality*: For all other such deficiencies or super-

fluties, as we may suppose to be in the outward worship of God, do but exercise *love, humility, or meekness*; and I look upon them where such be, as I do upon mine own failings or performances. Whatsoever, where I come, which I find to be so done or spoken, that I may absolutely conform thereunto, without offence to God or mine own Conscience, I therein joyn; and when ought is acted or said, whereto I cannot fully assent, I lift up my heart in secret prayer to God, beseeching him to vouchsafe pardon to me, and them, for what is ignorantly offended in; and to rectifie both mine and their erroneous understandings, who are then present: which practice of mine, if not worthy to be exemplar, I hope deserves, at least, a charitable censure.

Most of the quarrellings amongst *Christian Professours*, are about matters of less moment then tithing *mint*, and *annise*, and occasion the neglect of weightier matters, as it will appear, if well heeded; as also, that most of our Contests spring from *self-love*, though pretended for *God*; and tend more to satisfie the ambition and covetousness of men, then to advance his honour or true piety. For it is evident, that a *superintendency* over divine Rites, and the Worship of God, is unduly assumed by many, surreptitiously obtained, and magisterially usurped by some who had no lawful call thereunto; yea, & viciously exercised (in my judgment) by all those who endeavour to compel men (otherwise then by loving compellations) either to the omission, or to the use of this, or that *Discipline or Form of Prayer*, against their Consciences. They who think no *Oblation's* accepted
of

of God, but those *set Forms*, or extemporary Devotions which they affect, are equally guilty of a superstitious error: For, both the one and the other, may be compleat or defective, warrantably or unwarrantably exhibited, according as they are performed. *Extemporary Prayers* are *set forms* to all who hear them, except to the *Speakers* only; and perhaps also, to some of their knowledges, who speak them, the greatest part of those Prayers are *set forms*, and otherwhites, in that regard the more acceptable: For, that *form* which the Spirit of God hath at any time dictated, never leaves it to be less effectual then it was at first, if it shall at any other time be offered up on the like occasion by those, who with the same devotion, and a true sense of what is wanting, shall faithfully pray for it in the same words.

Some have affirmed in my hearing, that by declaring my private judgement touching matters controverted, I exposed my self to more sufferings, then were necessarily adventured: yet I do not so beleive: For all that I have publickly affirmed in subjects of that nature, whereupon troubles ensued, was by me intended for *Gods Glory* and the common good, (though turned to my personal detriment in appearance) and they have hitherto brought upon me no mischief, which God hath not converted to my spiritual advantage; whereas, many of those things, which my Censurers practise and profess, have occasioned uncharitable separations, without any benefit to themselves or others; yea disturbed their own and the publick tranquillity, to the daily enlarging of breaches, and to the hazzard of an universal

40
fal irreconcilable *Discord*; if the probable *evil*
consequents, be not timely prevented, by an ami-
cable declaring what we are perswaded in our
own heart, as we find just occasion; and by lea-
ving other men to the same Liberty, until they
shall be as conscientiously inclined to believe
otherwise: and then perhaps many will suspect
their own discretion as much as now they do
mine; and make it to themselves questionable,
who required their former *acting*, or *sufferings*, at
their hands. Let this be considered by all those
Censurers of my open-heartedness, to whom this
shall come; and let my friends be many or few,
as God pleaseth; for my trust is in him onely;
his honour is my chief aim; from him I cannot
conceal what I believe; and from men (as touch-
ing things relating to his Service, and the peace
of his Church) I will not; nor dissemble my be-
lief: as it should more appear, if it were alwayes,
as free for me to publish my thoughts, as I am to
write them, at this present.

It is for such respects, questioned by some,
What I am as to Religion; and of what *Society* I
profess my self to be? whereto I answer, that I
profess my self a *Catholick Christian*; mistake me
not; I do not mean a *Roman Catholick*, which are
terms contradictory to themselves, being so uni-
ted; because, the addition of, *Roman* to *Catho-
lick*, destroyes that *denomination*. I am a member
of that *Church* which is *Universal*, and of every
particular Church in those places where I reside,
so far forth onely (and no further) as it is a
member of the *Church-Catholick*, professing and
practising in purity, the *Faith*, *Doctrine* and
Disci-

Discipline thereof. I am not of *Pauls*, or *Apollo's*, or *Cephus*, or any *society*, but as they are of *Christ Jesus*, whom I desire to know (as *Paul* said he did) not only as he was in the flesh, but as he is spiritually to be known also; and to avoid that dividing into *parties*, which from the *Apostles* time, until this day, hath tended more to the nourishing of *Discord*, and confirming of *Errors*, than to edification in *Piety* and good life.

I separate from no *Church*, adhering to the foundations of Christianity, not wilfully professing and practising what may be destructive thereto, though there be some defects or corruptions therein. I joy not in doing or approving what is not approvable in my understanding, yet am as far from a *disaffectionate separation* on my part, as from separating my self from my self, or a limb from my body, though painful & loathsome unto me, by a wound or some disease: For I shall cherish it until it so corrupts and gangrenes, that it may destroy my whole body; and then I shall willingly be rid of it. In like manner, waiting in love upon God's good pleasure toward me, and every weak member of *Christ's mystical Body*, I will endeavour to preserve my self and them in unity, and leave the anathematizing or judging others to him only, whose members they are, or pretend to be.

The Title of a *Catholick Christian* aforementioned, I affect not out of singularity, but admit of it by way of distinction only, to answer their questionings, who ask of what *Religion*, or of what *Church* I am: And I profess an absolute adherence to the *Catholick Church* only, because that onely is infallible, and the *Sanctuary* of God upon earth; wherein his *Mysteries* are preserved in purity; and wherein I may have assurance of salvation by continuing therein. I wave the confining my belief or practice to any one *National* or *Congregational Society* of *Christians*, not out of a factious inclination, or petulant dislike of any: But having a desire to be instrumental in uniting men dissenting in judgment both unto God, and unto each other in love, I conceive that endeavour would be suspected of partiality, & not so effectually prosecuted, if I made my self a party with any other Fraternity more than with another: some of whom strain at a Gnat, and swallow a Camel; or so presume of their infallibility, that

that they exclude all as Reprobates, who dissent from them in *Dôctrine* or *Discipline*; having also more affection for those who are zealous in the *Opinions* and *Practicities* which they approve, (though held in unrighteousness for carnal ends) than they have for them who are conscientious Professors of the Truth in *Godliness* and *Sincerity*, according to their measure of faith and understanding, if they dissent from them but in a *Creed*. For these and such like respects, I suffer not my self to be bound up with any *Congregation*, (as aforesaid) but so far as the *Christian Liberty*, and the exercise of *Charity* toward all men may be preserved: as also the *Peace* and *Credit* of all Societies professing Jesus Christ, so far forth as it ought to be; for though he may have some what to allege against them; (as he had against the seven Churches in *Asia*, to whom he wrote by St. *John*) they are all in some degree *Nurses of Piety* and *good manners*: And many thousands have had, and have in them *initiations* into that which is best approvable. Our *National Church* was my first *Nurse*, and I confess with thankfulness, & from thence first drew nourishment strengthening me towards eternal life; that I had there also *Dry-Nurses*, some of which fed me wholesomely, and some to the endangering my being poisoned or starved. But I have but one *Spiritual Mother*, which is the *Catholic Church* afore-mentioned.

There are other *Objections* whispered; some against my late published *Meditations upon the Lords Prayer*; some against my Tract, entitled, *The Persecution of the Tongue among Brethren*, a Manuscript not yet published; and some others, which I shall by God's assistance, vindicate as soon as I have leisure, from misapprehension; and make it evident, that there are many who have heretofore complained of severity in those by whom they were persecuted for their Consciences, who would quickly (had they power answerable to their will) improve it into that *Persecution*, which is the *Mark of the BEAST* in the forehead, or in the hand. But, having for just cause, added this here, I will conclude for the present, heartily beseeching GOD, that his *Peace* may be established and continued among his *Saints* for ever.